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ABSTRACT

This study examined evaluation processes used by Arkansas school boards to evaluate their superintendents, and compared the data with results from a recent national survey reporting techniques used in the evaluation of superintendents, data about who had input in conducting the evaluation, criteria used in the evaluation process, and traits of an effective superintendent. School board presidents (SBPs) throughout Arkansas were sent an anonymous two-page questionnaire, which included questions from the 1989 Educational Research Service Survey about the frequency, criteria, techniques, and types of evaluations used by their school boards to evaluate superintendents. Ninety-three of 161 questionnaires were returned (a 57.8 percent response rate). About two-thirds of the Arkansas SBPs reported that formal evaluations of the superintendent were conducted in their districts. Nationally, little difference was noted in the proportions of districts conducting formal evaluations of their superintendents. In Arkansas, significantly more larger districts reported formal evaluations of the superintendent than did smaller districts. Compared to the national study, significantly more districts in Arkansas with formal evaluations reported that the superintendent's compensation should be based on the evaluation; however, Arkansas SBPs reported similar importance for six of eight criteria used in evaluating the superintendent's effectiveness. Arkansas SBPs placed more importance on leadership and knowledge of the field. (RLC)

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EVALUATION PROCESSES USED BY ARKANSAS SCHOOL BOARDS TO EVALUATE SUPERINTENDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the evaluation processes used by Arkansas school boards to evaluate their superintendents. Contrasts were also made with the results from a recent national survey which reported techniques used in the evaluation of superintendents, information about who had input in conducting the evaluation, criteria used as factors in the evaluation process, and characteristics of an effective superintendent.

School board presidents throughout Arkansas were sent an anonymous two-page questionnaire, with mailings being stratified by five categories of district size. Ninety-three of 161 questionnaires sent, were returned (58%). About two-thirds of the Arkansas school board presidents reported formal evaluations of the superintendent were conducted in their districts (68%). This proportion was less than the 87% reported nationally.

Nationally, when contrasted by size of the district, little difference was noted in the proportions of districts conducting formal evaluations of the superintendent. In Arkansas, significantly more larger districts reported formal evaluations of the superintendent than did smaller districts. In Arkansas, significantly more districts with formal evaluations reported the superintendent's compensation should be based on the evaluation than in the national study. However, when contrasted with the national study, Arkansas school board presidents reported similar importance for six of eight criteria used in evaluating the effectiveness of the superintendent. Arkansas school board presidents placed more importance on two criteria: leadership and knowledge of the field.

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The superintendent is the public school district's chief executive officer and its chief administrator. Most superintendents are appointed by the local board of education and are responsible for administering the policies established by the board.

In recent years "accountability" has become an important concept in American education. Lawmakers and the general public have increasingly insisted that educators be called to account for the money being spent on schools and the quality of education produced. As part of this accountability movement, much attention has been directed toward improving the evaluation of teachers and school administrators. Attention is now beginning to focus on ways to formally and effectively evaluate the performance of school district superintendents (Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

Improving educational performance is the basic reason for a school board to systematically evaluate the superintendent. Because of the superintendent's unique position as chief executive officer, he or she affects the school district's overall performance (Genck & Klingenberg, 1978). Systematic evaluations can help superintendents maintain an awareness of these interconnections and prevent them from becoming detached from the education for which they are responsible (Genck, 1983).

The New Jersey School Board Association (1987) reported school boards, in general, have been reluctant to carry out this important responsibility of superintendent evaluations. This reluctance is attributed to the fact that boards are not sure how to proceed. Their lack of knowledge on the subject as well as their relationship with the superintendent often prevents an effective evaluation.

J. K. Williams (personal communication, June 22, 1992) states very little has been written about the evaluation processes of Arkansas superintendents. Williams commented the Arkansas School Board Association had no literature available on superintendent evaluations by Arkansas school boards.

Dittloff (1982) states the majority of public school district superintendents report they are not evaluated regularly by their school boards. However, data from a 1989 nationwide Educational Research Service survey indicates evaluations of superintendents have become widespread.

Data from the 1989 nationwide ERS survey indicate almost 90 percent of superintendents reported they are currently evaluated at least once a year. Only a small proportion (11%) reported they are "not very often" or "never" evaluated by their school boards.

Traditionally, the most commonly used means of evaluating superintendent performance have been checklists or rating scales (Booth & Glaub, 1978). This observation is verified by the results of the 1989 ERS survey, which found nearly 80% of respondents reported checklists or rating scales were used in their evaluations.

Jones, Working, and Biernacki (1981) state the superintendent should be held accountable only for those things for which he or she has operational responsibility. This requires a mutual understanding of the working relationship between the superintendent and the school board on what is to be evaluated.

Dittloff (1982) states successful evaluations do not just happen. They are the result of carefully planned and executed procedures for measuring performance against well defined goals. Performance assessment of superintendents should be an ongoing process which keeps the superintendent formally and systematically apprised of his or her performance. Effective evaluations focus primarily on specific performance, or lack of performance. In the ERS report, Robinson and Bickers (1990) indicate clear, relevant performance criteria are an important component of evaluations. How the school board expresses its expectations when hiring a superintendent, who determines evaluation criteria, and what criteria have been important in recent evaluations are relevant to good evaluations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to survey school board presidents to describe the extent to which Arkansas school boards formally evaluate their superintendents. This study, with the use of a questionnaire, profiled questions concerning the frequency of evaluations, the criteria used, evaluation

techniques, sources of formal evaluation input, and characteristics of an effective superintendent. For those school board presidents whose school did not have a formal evaluation in place, the questionnaire addressed the same questions from the standpoint of their board's actions if a formal evaluation process was adopted.

The responses for Arkansas districts that had formal evaluation processes established and districts that did not have formal evaluation processes in place were contrasted. The data from these responses were summarized and presented in tabular form. The responses for the first five items were summarized and recorded by giving each criteria a numerical value, based on the option selected by the respondent, according to this scale: (1) Yes (or first option), (2) No (or second option), (3) Third option, or (4) Fourth option. The two items in which the respondent was instructed to check all responses that applied were marked according to the scale of (1) if checked, and (blank) in not checked. The last item on the questionnaire was recorded by the following scale: (1) High, (2) Moderate, (3) Very Little, or (4) None.

The Arkansas school districts were stratified by size. The strata were as follows: (1) less than 300 student population, (2) 300 - 999 student population, (3) 1000 - 2499 student population, (4) 2500 - 9999 student population, and (5) 10,000 or more student population . This stratification corresponded to that used by the ERS survey. The results of the responses from Arkansas districts, stratified by size, were contrasted using the null hypothesis, H_0: $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = \theta_3 = \theta_4 = \theta_5$. The proportion of responses from the Arkansas school board presidents were contrasted to the ERS respondents using the one proportion hypothesis test, H_0: $\theta = k$.

Limitations

Data collected in this study will be subject to a limitation of response rate. Although random selection was used, Arkansas has only three school districts with student populations of 10,000 or more and 35 districts whose enrollments fall in the 2500 - 9999 strata. A second limitation will be the validity of responses as it relates to the respondents understanding of the questions and the adequacy of the survey instrument. The study does not attempt to analyze if "formal evaluation" has the same meaning to all respondents.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

The following literature review covers reported research concerning (a) reasons for superintendent evaluations, (b) the frequency of superintendent evaluations, (c) procedures used for superintendent evaluations, and (d) characteristics of an effective superintendent. The literature verifies each of the above to be valuable components of an effective evaluation process.

Reasons for Superintendent Evaluations

When a school board evaluates its superintendent, it also creates opportunity to improve its own effectiveness. Evaluating the superintendent compels the board to understand the superintendent's management role and responsibilities, thus more clearly defining its own policy making role. The process of setting goals and standards for the superintendent also assists the board in setting district goals and objectives, and in planning to better meet the educational needs of the district's students (Dickinson, 1980).

Robinson and Bickers (1990) in reporting on the ERS survey, state a majority (66.4%) of respondents say the criteria for their evaluations are determined jointly by the school board and the superintendent. Nearly a quarter of the respondents (24.3%) replied superintendent evaluation criteria are determined solely by the school board.

While the superintendent and the school board determine the criteria for the superintendent evaluations, Robinson and Bickers (1990) report several individuals or groups may provide input into the superintendent evaluation process. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents in the ERS survey stated the school board has formal input into the process. Teachers have input into superintendent evaluations in only 11.5% of districts. Principals and assistant principals are reported to have input

into the evaluation process in only 10.7% of the districts while students are involved with input in only 2.3% of the districts.

Bippus (1985) reports improved superintendent-board relations can be another benefit of superintendent evaluations. These relations must be constructive for both parties to render the best possible service to the school district's children. A formal evaluation process, followed regularly, keeps vital communication lines open. A breakdown in superintendent-board communications can be especially damaging during a period of crisis. In fact, according to Haughland (1987), such a breakdown can itself precipitate a crisis. Effective communication techniques, which are enhanced by regular evaluations, can bring differences and misunderstandings to light so they can be effectively handled.

School district goals and priorities often change from year to year. When district priorities change, a shift of emphasis in the superintendent's professional and management responsibilities occurs. Performance evaluation is an ideal setting for the board and superintendent to identify and ratify these changes in the latter's responsibilities (Nemir, 1988).

Robinson and Bickers (1990) state the great majority of superintendent evaluations are held in closed school board meetings (85.3%) rather than in open meetings (13.0%). Superintendents are more likely to be evaluated during open meetings in very small districts (19.7%) than in small districts (10.6%) or large districts (10.7%). The ERS survey stratified the school districts by district enrollment using the following strata: very small (less than 300), small (300 - 2499), medium (2500 - 9999), and large (10,000 or more).

Another important reason for the school board to evaluate the superintendent is to provide documentation for board decisions, both positive and negative, concerning the superintendent (Braddom, 1986). If, for example, a board believes it has become necessary to terminate its superintendent's contract, the records of past evaluations will provide documentation to substantiate the board's decision. Conversely, periodic documentation of sustained satisfactory or exemplary performance can provide an effective defense against attacks on the superintendent by hostile members of the community (Booth & Glaub, 1978).

Gould (1982) reports the results of his survey reveal the most important reason for conducting an evaluation of the superintendent is to assess his relationship with the board. However, Genck and Klingenberg (1978) identify improving educational performance as the basic reason for a school board to systematically evaluate the superintendent.

Bippus (1985) asserts superintendents who do not insist on being evaluated regularly by their board are courting trouble. He adds any board of education that fails to formally evaluate its superintendent does a disservice to the school, to the greater community, and to the superintendent.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) report fewer than one-fourth of all superintendents (24.5%) report that some part of their compensation is based on their evaluation results. Superintendents in very small districts are less likely to have some part of their compensation based on evaluation results (9.5%) than are their colleagues in small districts (28.2%), medium districts (31.2%), and large districts (29.3%).

Frequency of Superintendent Evaluations

Booth and Glaub (1978) stated the most frequent and grievous error which school boards commit in superintendent evaluation is omission. Redfern (1980) wrote boards of education too often use the "no news is good news" approach to evaluation. In this approach, no performance evaluation is attempted as long as the school board perceives the superintendent is performing satisfactorily. When a crisis occurs, the board suddenly feels compelled to conduct a hurried evaluation. Such evaluations are likely to focus on a few negative aspects of the superintendent's performance and to overlook many positive aspects.

Cunningham and Hentges (1982) and Dittloff (1982) reported it has been the accepted practice of a majority of public schools to have no regular evaluations of superintendents by school boards. However, Robinson and Bickers (1990), reporting the results of an ERS survey, state the vast majority of school districts evaluate their superintendent on a regular basis. About nine in 10 responding superintendents said they are evaluated at least annually by their school boards. This group includes

79.7% who are evaluated once a year, and 7.1% who are evaluated more than once a year. The widespread practice of evaluating superintendents at least once a year holds true for large, medium, small, and very small school districts. The ERS survey stratified the school districts by district enrollment using the following strata: very small (less than 300), small (300 - 2499), medium (2500 - 9999), and large (10,000 or more).

Procedures Used for Superintendent Evaluations

Robinson and Bickers (1990) in the ERS survey, report superintendents are typically evaluated by one or more of the following methods: checklists or rating scales, or written statements. Each of these methods has advantages and potential pitfalls. Local boards of education and superintendents should examine the pros and cons of each approach before selecting the method or methods best suited their specific districts' needs.

Checklist and Rating Scales

Traditionally, the most common procedure of evaluating superintendent performance has been checklists or rating scales (Jones, Working, & Biernacki, 1981). Robinson and Bickers (1990) state the results of the 1989 ERS nationwide survey found 79.7% of responding superintendents reported checklists or rating scales were used in their evaluations. When using checklists or rating scales, each board member independently assesses the superintendent. This is completed by indicating which one of several statements most accurately describes the superintendent, or by rating performance criteria on a scale from one to five. Board members then prepare a composite evaluation which they share with the superintendent. This composite provides the basis for a board-superintendent discussion of the latter's performance (Redfern, 1980).

Checklists and rating scales are popular for at least two reasons. One, they provide specific data, giving at least the appearance of exactitude (Jones, Working, & Biernacki, 1981). Two, they are quick and easy to complete (Booth & Glaub, 1978). This can be appealing to board members and superintendents who face a myriad of demands on their limited time. Checklists can also help identify problem areas and facilitate communication between policy makers and management (Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

However, Booth and Glaub (1978) report the use of checklists can also present several problems. For instance, checklist items often reflect a general impression of a person's suitability to be superintendent rather than the superintendent's effectiveness as measured by results. Jones, Working, and Biernacki (1981) report checklists are sometimes designed to produce a total score which can be misleading if the values of the items are not relatively weighted to reflect district priorities. Perhaps the most subtle difficulty with checklists is their objective appearance conceals the inherent subjectivity of each evaluator's assessment. Commonly used terms such as "excellent" or "satisfactory" have different meanings for different people. Each individual will apply his or her own internal standards to such characterizations.

Written Statements

Braddom (1986) reports the principal benefit of the written statement is it allows for elaboration and far-ranging commentary on specific aspects of the superintendent's performance. Such descriptive detail is not possible with a checklist or a rating scale. However, each evaluator should take care that the comments are not overly long, unfocused, or lacking in specific conclusions.

In applying this method of evaluation, the individual board member writes a statement assessing the superintendent's strengths and weaknesses for each previously determined evaluation criterion. The board may wish to have all of the separate statements compiled into a composite assessment, or to report each statement separately. The board then holds a conference to allow the superintendent to respond to the evaluation (Redfern, 1980)

Robinson and Bickers (1990) state the results of the 1989 ERS survey found 60.8% of responding superintendents had written statements included in their evaluation. This practice of using written comments holds true in all size districts.

Characteristics of an Effective Superintendent

The effectiveness of a school's superintendent helps to determine a school district's success. McCall (1986) described 12 skills essential for school superintendents. These skills are problem analysis,

judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, stress tolerance, oral communication, written communication, range of interest, personal motivation, and educational values. These skills are interwoven into the characteristics others have stated as being important, if not essential, to a superintendent's being successful. Haugland (1987) lists nine professional competencies school boards and superintendents perceived to be desirable for successful employment of South Dakota superintendents. These nine competencies are public relations, school finance, personnel management, curriculum development, policy formation, school construction, accomplishing goals set by school board, superintendent-board relations, and collective negotiations.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) in the ERS report list 13 criteria which superintendents stated were important factors in being effective. The criteria are general effectiveness, achieving performance objectives, leadership, knowledge in field of education, student achievement outcomes, agreement with board, board/superintendent relationships, staff/superintendent relationships, student/superintendent relationships, parent and community/superintendent relationships, personal characteristics, recruitment, employment and supervision of personnel, and budgeting.

Morrow (1989) states leadership ability, attitudes/morals, budgetary knowledge, personnel management and communication skills are the top five characteristics board presidents, in Arkansas, rank as being needed by Arkansas superintendents in order to be effective.

Sales and Taylor (1983) report much information about the Arkansas school superintendent. However, their information is more about the attitudes and opinions of Arkansas superintendents, than about evaluations.

Booth and Glaub (1978) state researchers have divided the factors facilitating a superintendent's ultimate success into two categories: internal and external factors. Internal factors include skills, knowledge, values, and work habits which the individual brings to the position. The ability to handle stress and the ability to remain calm (especially in a crisis) are also important internal factors (Wilson, 1980). External factors are the financial and political climates of the locale, the school board's expectations, and district and state laws affecting managerial latitude (Booth & Glaub, 1978).

Wilson (1980) reports, on a survey of 184 Ohio district superintendents, two important elements were common among superintendents rated as "most successful." One element was public relations skills. These superintendents engaged in face-to-face contact with school constituents and community members as often as possible. A similar conclusion was reached by Anderson and Lavid (1982) when they studied successful Missouri superintendents.

In reporting on the ERS survey, Robinson and Bickers (1990) state public support is essential for the maintenance and growth of public education. This necessitates constructive relations with the local media. A systematic plan for news briefings and keeping the public adequately informed about school issues can help foster and maintain vital public support for the schools. Parent and community/superintendent relationships were listed by 49.3% of superintendents in the ERS survey as important evaluation criteria.

The second element identified by Wilson (1980) was a healthy, open, and constructive superintendent-school board relationship. These superintendents were the superintendents who regularly evaluated their subordinate administrators as well.

Robinson and Bickers (1990) state while the board is primarily responsible for its own performance, the superintendent is in a position to enhance its effectiveness. Superintendents should provide necessary materials to board members well in advance of meetings. Presentations to the board should be sufficiently detailed, but well organized and as succinct as possible. Of the superintendents who responded to the ERS survey, 75.1% stated board/superintendent relationships were an important criterion in their evaluation.

Summary

The literature review verifies evaluating superintendents serves several important purposes. However, one of the most common errors in superintendent evaluations is "no evaluation" until a crisis occurs. Checklists and rating scales are the most common methods used in evaluations, but they are not without their disadvantages. A superintendent's effectiveness depends on both internal and

external factors. The superintendent's ability to have good relationships with the public and the school board appear to be the most important elements in his or her perceived effectiveness.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Design of the Study

The design of this study is a comparative survey using a mailed questionnaire. Questions from the 1989 ERS Survey were used to survey the school board presidents.The school board presidents were asked to respond to questions as to the frequency, criteria, techniques, and types of evaluations used by his or her school board in evaluating the superintendent. If a school board did not have a formal evaluation process, the board president was asked to respond to questions describing his or her board's actions, as if they had a formal evaluation process in place.

Population

There are 321 school board presidents of public schools in Arkansas. The school board presidents of all Arkansas public schools represent the target population.

Sampling Procedures

The Arkansas Education Directory for 1992 lists 321 school districts operating in Arkansas. The Arkansas School Board Association provided a mailing list of the school board presidents for each of these schools. To ensure that all size districts, in the nationwide ERS Survey, were represented in the Arkansas survey, a minimum of 35 districts in each strata were surveyed if possible. The Arkansas Education Directory revealed the following number of districts in each strata:

Strata	District Size	Number in Arkansas
1	less than 300	54
2	300 - 999	162
3	1000 - 2499	67
4	2500 - 9999	35
5	10000 or more	3

The survey was mailed to 35 out of 54 board presidents in stratum one, 53 out of 162 board presidents in stratum two, 35 out of 67 board presidents in stratum three, 35 out of 35 board presidents in stratum four, and all three board presidents in stratum five.

Instrumentation

A cover letter accompanied a questionnaire explaining the objectives of the survey. The respondents were asked to check responses that most closely described their schools situation. Upon completion, the respondents were asked to return the questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope which was provided. Respondents were offered results of the survey if they wished to receive them.

The questionnaire presented a profile of questions corresponding to the questions in the 1989 ERS survey. The board members were asked to indicate the frequency, criteria, techniques, and depth of their superintendent evaluations. If a board president's response was "no formal evaluation process in place," he or she was asked to respond to questions describing the board's actions as if they had adopted a formal evaluation process.

Questionnaire responses were recorded by giving each criteria a numerical value according to the option the respondent marked. For the first five items the following scale was used: (1) Yes (or marking the first option), (2) No (or second option), (3) Third option, or (4) Fourth option. Items where the respondent could "check all that apply" the following scale was used: (1) if checked or (blank) if unchecked. The last item on the questionnaire used the following scale: (1) High, (2) Moderate, (3) Very Little, or (4) None.

Data Gathering and Recording Procedures

Returned questionnaires were placed in two groups: those with and without a formal evaluation process in place. No identification of the respondent was made. The responses were coded and

recorded on tally sheets. Percentages were calculated for each item. The summary tallies and percentages were tallied for each group.

Data Analysis and Reporting Procedures

The proportion responding to each category on each item was determined. Contrasts were made between Arkansas districts that have and those that do not have formal evaluation processes in place.

Proportions of Arkansas school districts, by strata, were contrasted by using the null hypothesis: there is no significant difference in the proportion of Arkansas school districts using a formal evaluation process as related to the size of the districts.

Proportions of Arkansas school districts using formal evaluation processes were contrasted, overall, to the proportions of the ERS responses, using the null hypothesis: there is no significant difference in the proportion of Arkansas school districts using a formal evaluation process and the national proportion reported in the ERS survey. All tests were conducted at the .05 significance level.

RESULTS

Research Methodology

A questionnaire and cover letter were prepared and mailed to 35 Arkansas school board presidents of districts with enrollments less than 300, 53 of the board presidents of districts with enrollments between 300 and 999, 35 of the board presidents of districts with enrollments between 1000 and 2499, 35 of the board presidents of districts with enrollments between 2500 and 9999, and all three board presidents of districts with enrollments above 10000. A total of 161 questionnaires were mailed to Arkansas school board presidents. Responses were received from 93 of the board presidents for a 57.8% response rate. The data from these responses are summarized and provide a picture of current school district practices regarding evaluation of superintendents.

The results of the Arkansas survey indicate a majority of Arkansas districts (67.7%) formally evaluate their superintendents. Approximately 32% of Arkansas school board presidents state their districts have no formal evaluation processes in place.

About nine in 10 of the school board presidents who responded 'Yes' to having a formal evaluation process in place (95.2%) said they evaluate their superintendent at least annually. The widespread practice of evaluating superintendents at least once a year holds true for all size school districts. The data indicates 4.8% of the school boards, with formal evaluation processes in place, evaluate their superintendents more often than once a year. Ninety-three percent of the districts without a formal evaluation process indicated superintendents should be evaluated at least annually. The need for conducting annual evaluations held up for all size districts without a formal evaluation process in place.

The school board's evaluation of the superintendent occurs in a closed meeting in 93.7% of districts with formal evaluation procedures in place, and in open meetings in 6.3% of the districts with formal evaluation processes. However, superintendents are evaluated in open meetings in 33.3% of the very small districts, a significantly greater percentage than the other strata. Approximately 87% of the school boards whose district does not have a formal evaluation process established, reported the evaluation should take place in a closed meeting.

School board presidents were asked whether any part of the superintendents compensation was based on the evaluation. Slightly more than one-third (36.5%) of the presidents with formal evaluations answered 'yes'. The percentage of school board presidents whose district did not have a formal evaluation process in place was considerably higher. About 67% indicated part of the superintendents compensation should be based on the evaluation. Superintendents in districts with enrollments of between 300 and 999 are more likely (50.0%) to receive performance based compensation than are those in any other size district in Arkansas.

Of the school board presidents who reported having a formal evaluation process in place, 46.0% said the evaluation criteria are established jointly by the school board and superintendent. This practice is less common in very small school districts where just one-third (33.3%) of these districts

established evaluation criteria jointly. In 53.8% of the districts with enrollments between 1000 and 2499, the school board determines superintendent evaluation criteria on its own, a higher percentage than is the case for districts in any other enrollment strata.

The superintendent determines his/her own evaluation criteria, without the involvement of the school board, in only one reporting district (1.6%) in Arkansas. The superintendent is evaluated using no explicit criteria in 15.9% of the reporting districts according to the board president.

Many school board presidents with formal evaluation processes in place, use more than one method to evaluate their superintendent. The three most predominate evaluation techniques are discussion among board members (88.9%), performance checklists/rating scales (76.2%), and written comments used by 61.9% of the reporting districts.

The use of discussion among board members does not vary significantly by size of school district. However, the use of performance checklists/rating scales and written comments do vary by school district size. The performance checklists/rating scales method is used less often in districts with enrollments of less than 300 (33.3%) than in districts with enrollments between 300 and 999 (55.6%), districts with enrollments between 1000 and 2499 (92.3%), districts with enrollments between 2500 and 9999 (91.3%), or districts with enrollment of 10000 or more (100%). Written comments are used in 82.6% of districts with enrollments between 2500 and 9999 and 44.4% of districts with enrollments between 300 and 999.

The school board presidents whose school districts do not have a formal evaluation process in place agreed the top three evaluation techniques are discussion among board members (93.3%), performance checklists/rating scales (80.0%), and written comments (60.0%). the use of these three evaluation techniques did not vary significantly by the size of the district.

All responding school board presidents (100%) from districts with a formal evaluation process in place state the school board provides formal input into the superintendent evaluation. The superintendent themselves have formal input into their own evaluation in 55.6% of the districts.

The survey results, from school board presidents with formal evaluation processes in place, indicate the superintendent evaluations are primarily the concern of the school board and the superintendent in most districts. Other individuals and groups have much less formal input into superintendent evaluations. Teachers have input in 12.7% of districts, principals/assistant principals in 11.1%, parents in 11.1%, central office staff in 7.9%, and students in 4.8%. However, both teachers and parents are more likely to have formal input into superintendent evaluations in schools with enrollments less than 999.

The two characteristics that stand out as the most important, to being an effective superintendent, in the opinion of school board presidents with formal evaluation processes in place were general effectiveness, rated high by 85.7%, and leadership, rated high by 84.1%. Five additional characteristics rated "high" in importance by at least half of the respondents were budget development and implementation (74.6%), knowledge in field of education (71.4%), staff/superintendent relationships (68.2%), parent and community/superintendent relationships (65.1%), and board/superintendent relationships (63.5%). However, budget development and implementation received a "high" rating in more districts with enrollments of less than 300 (83.3%) and districts with enrollments between 300 and 999 (83.3%) than districts with enrollments between 1000 and 2499 (76.9%), districts with enrollments between 2500 and 9999 (69.6%), or districts with enrollments greater than 10000 (33.3%).

Independent Two Proportion Hypothesis Test

The two proportion independent hypothesis test was run on each questionnaire item. The test contrasted the Arkansas schools with formal evaluations in place and those without formal evaluations. A significantly greater proportion of the districts without a formal evaluation process in place stated superintendent compensation should be based on the evaluation than those districts with formal evaluations established. A significantly greater proportion of the districts without a formal evaluation, indicated the criteria for superintendent evaluations should be determined jointly by the board and superintendent than those districts with a formal evaluation in place. A significantly greater proportion of the districts without a formal evaluation, indicated principals/assistant principals,

students, teachers, and parents should have an input into the evaluation process than districts with formal evaluations.

A two proportion independent test was also ran on each item contrasting the responses by strata. Significant differences were noted regarding district size (strata) and whether or not the district conducted a formal evaluation of the superintendent. Significantly more districts whose enrollment is between 2500 and 9999 conduct formal evaluations of the superintendent than districts whose enrollment is less than 300 or districts whose enrollment is between 300 and 999. No significant difference was found in any size district, regarding frequency of evaluation.

A significantly greater proportion of the districts whose enrollment is between 1000 and 2499, and districts with enrollments between 2500 and 9999, stated the superintendent evaluation should be held in a closed meeting than the districts with enrollments less than 300. A significant difference in the proportions of districts using checklists/rating scales and written comments as techniques for evaluating the superintendent was found.

Comparison of Responses to the Last Questionnaire Item

The last item on the questionnaire concerned characteristics of an effective superintendent. Means were computed for each characteristic for respondents with formal evaluations in place and respondents without formal evaluations. An independent t-test was applied to each characteristic to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the average responses of the board presidents in each group.

Independent t-test Results

Mean ratings of board presidents with formal evaluations in place were higher than those without formal evaluations in board/superintendent relationships, staff/superintendent relationships, student/superintendent relationships, and parent/community/superintendent relationships. However, a significant difference in the average ratings between the two groups was found to exist in only staff/superintendent relations.

Mean ratings of board presidents without formal evaluations in place were higher than those with formal evaluations in general effectiveness, leadership, knowledge in field of education, and budget development and implementation. A significant difference in the average ratings between the two groups was found to exist in only budget development and implementation. Student/superintendent relationships was rated lowest by both groups, but there was no significant difference in the ratings of the two groups for this characteristic.

Comparison of Arkansas With ERS Survey

The one proportion hypothesis test was used to contrast Arkansas school districts with the national ERS survey. The proportion of Arkansas school boards who evaluate their superintendents annually is significantly less than the national proportion. The proportion of Arkansas school boards who evaluate their superintendent in a closed meeting is significantly greater than the ERS proportion. A significant difference was also noted in the proportion of Arkansas school boards who state superintendent compensation should be based on the evaluation. The Arkansas proportion was significantly higher than the ERS proportion. Significant differences were also found in several areas relating to criteria for superintendent evaluations. The proportion of Arkansas school boards who use discussion among board members and observation by outside parties as part of their evaluation techniques is significantly greater than the ERS proportion reported nationally.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the evaluation processes used by Arkansas school boards to evaluate their superintendents. Contrasts were made with the results of a 1989 national survey including topics such as frequency of superintendent evaluations, techniques used in the evaluation, who had input in conducting the evaluation, criteria used as factors in the evaluation process, and characteristics of an effective superintendent.

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One hundred sixty-one school board presidents throughout Arkansas, in five strata, by district size, were the participants of this study. Ninety-three of the board presidents responded to the anonymous two-page questionnaire.

Responses were recorded for each questionnaire item and calculations were made to compare the responses of Arkansas districts with formal evaluations and those without a formal evaluation process. Contrasts were also made, using an independent two proportion test, on the responses of Arkansas districts by strata. The one proportion hypothesis test was used to compare the proportion of Arkansas districts using a formal evaluation with the national proportion reported in the ERS survey.

Conclusions

The data gathered in conducting this study warrants certain conclusions about the evaluation processes of Arkansas superintendents. The data verify a majority of Arkansas districts formally evaluate their superintendents on at least an annual basis. A great majority of these Arkansas school boards (93.7%) conduct the evaluation in a closed meeting. However, only slightly more than one-third of the boards who formally evaluate their superintendents base any part of the superintendent's compensation on the evaluation.

In Arkansas, the criteria for the superintendent evaluation is determined jointly by the board and superintendent or solely by the board in a majority of the districts. The three predominate evaluation techniques in use in Arkansas are discussion among board members, performance checklists/rating scales, and written comments. Significantly more larger districts use checklists/rating scales than do smaller districts.

School boards, followed by superintendents, provide input into the superintendent evaluation process more than any other groups or individuals in Arkansas. The school boards in Arkansas consider general effectiveness and leadership to be the two most important characteristics of being an effective superintendent.

When Arkansas schools with formal evaluations of superintendents were contrasted with schools without formal evaluations, significant differences were found in the proportions concerning superintendent compensation based on the evaluation, who determines the evaluation criteria, and who should have an input into the evaluation process. In each case the proportions were significantly greater in districts without a formal evaluation process than those districts with a formal evaluation process.

The contrasts by strata revealed significantly more larger districts conduct formal evaluations of the superintendent than smaller districts. Also, a significantly greater proportion of larger districts stated the evaluation should be conducted in closed meetings than the very small districts.

The independent t-tests for the characteristics of an effective superintendent for the districts with formal evaluations and those districts without formal evaluations showed significant differences in staff/superintendent relationships and budget development and implementation. Student/superintendent relationships was rated lowest by both groups, but there was no significance difference between the two items.

The contrast of Arkansas districts with the national study revealed the proportion of Arkansas districts who formally evaluate the superintendent is significantly lower than the national proportion. The proportion of Arkansas districts that conduct the evaluation in closed meetings, base part of the superintendents compensation on the evaluation, use discussion among board members, and use observation by outside parties as part of the evaluation technique is significantly greater than the proportion reported nationally.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented as a result of this study:

1. In the case of replication of this study, it is recommended a larger population be used. For greater generalization, all school districts in the state should be used.
2. Another area needing to be examined is how the evaluation processes in Arkansas compares to the other Southern states surrounding Arkansas. As Arkansas has a greater number of small districts,

compared to more urban states, comparisons need to be made with states similar in size and location.

3. The results of this study could be used by the school board association to gain better understanding of the evaluation practices taking place in Arkansas. With a better understanding would come the availability of districts to share their evaluation processes.
4. The results of this study could be used by education administrators to help formulate evaluation procedures for their district. By having a voice in determining the evaluation procedures, administrators could make sure they were evaluated over their actual responsibilities.
5. The results of this study could be used by the Arkansas Association of School Administrators to develop a uniform evaluation process for Arkansas schools. In developing a uniform plan. consideration would need to be given to the wide range, by size, of districts in Arkansas.

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